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ABSTRACT

This study explored hetero- and auto-stereotyping in 23 Pakistani students studying in the United States; 21 French and 20 American college students enrolled at the University of Besancon, France; and 59 American college students who had never lived or studied abroad. All subjects completed a four-page questionnaire in their native language in which they rated Americans, Pakistanis, and French on seven bipolar adjective dimensions: friendly/unfriendly, polite/impolite, industrious/lazy, open/closed, religious/anti-religious, generous/stingy, and patriotic/not patriotic. Results were analyzed by means of analysis of variance in three stages: (1) comparison of overall judgments of each group by each other group; (2) 21 comparisons (3 groups compared on 7 bipolar adjectives) to determine extent of cross-cultural agreement; (3) intragroup comparison of judgments to assess the degree to which subjects in each country discriminated among their stereotypes. Results showed a wide diversity of opinion among the different groups of students, and suggest that the context of intergroup contact should be considered in future stereotyping research. References are included. (TE)

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Hetero- and Autostereotyping in Pakistani, French, and American College Students

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A paper presented at the meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, Boston, April, 1989.

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(1) Title: Hetero- and Autostereotyping in Pakistani, French, and American College Students.

(2) Topical Session: Social; Stereotyping, Cross-Cultural Research.

(3) Problem:

Research has consistently shown that direct exposure to and interaction with members of a different culture will change the stereotypes a person holds about that cultural group(McGrady & McGrady, 1976; Triandis & Vassiliou, 1967). However, it has not always been clear whether people are more likely to change their opinions about groups they previously knew little about(Prothro & Melikian, 1955) or more easily change their view of groups to which they have already had some exposure(McGrady & McGrady, 1976). It had usually been thought that since we know our own group best, our autostereotypes(beliefs about one's own group) should be even less apt to change than stereotypes of others(heterostereotypes). The studies by Triandis and Vassiliou(1967) and McGrady & McGrady(1976) and a study by Nichols & McAndrew(1984) however, indicate that this may not always be the case. The Nichols & McAndrew study also indicated that a crucial variable may be whether the intergroup contact occurs in one's own or in the other group's country, and determined that the stereotyping process is complicated further by cross-cultural differences in the way people are predisposed to evaluate others.

This controversy has implications for the problem of assessing the validity of stereotypes. The two methods that have traditionally been used are either a form of "convergent validity" whereby the stereotypes of several groups concerning a different group are checked for agreement, or to match stereotypes and autostereotypes for agreement. If autostereotypes are more variable than previously thought, and if it is not clear whether high or low contact groups are more likely to change their stereotype with new information, then it is highly questionable whether the validity of stereotypes should be assessed by either of these techniques. Aside from this and other(Brislin, 1983) scientific reasons for more cross-cultural research, several authors have pointed out the practical needs for such research as well(Brown, 1963; Burton, 1972).

The present study was undertaken with some of the aforementioned problems in mind. It is intended as an exploratory study that will add to the pool of cross-cultural data and allow an

examination of the hetero- and autostereotypes held by four groups of subjects differing in the amount of contact they have had with each other.

(4) Subjects: Subjects were 59 American college students who had never lived or studied abroad, 20 American college students enrolled in an overseas program at the University of Besancon, France, 21 French students at the University of Besancon, and 23 Pakistani students studying at a liberal arts college in the United States.

(5) Procedure: All subjects completed a four page questionnaire in their native language(Pakistanis were given a choice of English or Urdu) in which they rated American, Pakistanis, and the French on seven bipolar adjective dimensions and also estimated the number of individuals from each of the stimulus cultures that they had met. The adjective pairs were friendly/unfriendly, polite/ impolite, industrious/lazy, open/closed, religious/anti-religious, generous/stingy, and patriotic/not patriotic.

(6) Results: The groups ranged from combinations of very low intergroup contact(French with Pakistanis, Americans in the U.S. with the French) to very high contact(Americans in France with the French, Pakistanis with Americans). The results were analyzed in three stages, all by means of appropriate ANOVAs. First, overall judgments by each subject group were collapsed across stimulus groups and compared as a way of uncovering the perceptual biases of the different groups. Second, twenty-one comparisons(3 stimulus cultures compared on seven bipolar dimensions) were made to determine the extent of cross-cultural agreement on the content of the stereotypes. Finally, the judgments for each stimulus culture were compared within each subject group to assess the degree to which the subjects in each country discriminated among their stereotypes. These data are too lengthy to completely describe here; they will be described in detail during the paper presentation and will be made available to the audience.

There were several stereotypes that held up cross-culturally. There was unanimous agreement among the four groups that the French were the most unfriendly, the Americans the least polite but most open, and the Pakistanis the most religious of the three cultures. A lot of contact between groups was positively related to a tendency to make extreme judgments about the other group,

especially if the judgments were negative. The Americans in France generally had a more positive autostereotype than the Americans in the U.S., and curiously, the stereotype of the French held by the Americans in the U.S. was closer to the French autosteroetype than was the stereotype of the Americans living in France.

There were several significant differences($p.<.05$) in how the subject groups were predisposed to see others. There was also relatively little agreement among the groups on most of the traits, with even the two groups of Americans differing significantly on what the typical American was like.

(7) Implications and Conclusions: Although there were a few generally held stereotypes, a more striking finding of this study was the diversity of opinion among the different groups of students about the three stimulus cultures. These differences seemed to be a product of different generalized expectancies as well as the amount of actual contact with the culture. More intergroup contact generally resulted in an increased willingness to confidently express stereotypes, and this was especially true for negative stereotypes. The context in which this contact took place was also an important variable. Intergroup contact had different effects if it occurred in the subjects' own country than if the subjects were visitors in the culture in question. This effect was particularly noticeable in the perceptions of the friendliness of the other group. Visitors were usually seen as relatively unfriendly, while natives were seen as very friendly. Interestingly enough, there was no tendency for high-contact groups to hold stereotypes that were similar to the autostereotype of the other group. This seemed to be due at least in part to the fragility of autostereotypes, and calls into question the reliability of validating stereotypes through agreement with autostereotypes. The results also suggest that the context of intergroup contact may be an overlooked variable that should be considered in future stereotyping research.

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